

## Excerpt from "The Female Body"

Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood (1939- ) was born in Ottawa, Ontario. She earned a B.A. from the University of Toronto in 1961 and an A.M. from Radcliffe College in 1962. She's taught at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, the University of Toronto, and New York University. Her numerous stories, novels, and poems are complemented by her editorial and critical work, which includes the *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*. One of her best-known novels, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), which was made into a successful film in 1990, describes life in a future world where women suffer severe repression. Her most recent novel is *The Blind Assassin* (2000). Her work also appears frequently in periodicals such as *The American Historical Review*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*. Atwood is the recipient of dozens of awards and honors, including a Guggenheim fellowship and several honorary degrees. "The Female Body" is an excerpt from *Good Bones* (1992) and was reprinted in *Good Bones and Simple Murders* (1994).

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He said, I won't have one of those things in the house. It gives a young girl a false notion of beauty, not to mention anatomy. If a real woman was built like that she'd fall on her face.

She said, If we don't let her have one like all the other girls she'll feel singled out. It'll become an issue. She'll long for one and she'll long to turn into one. Repression breeds sublimation. You know that.

He said, It's not just the pointy plastic tits, it's the wardrobes. The wardrobes and that stupid male doll, what's his name, the one with the underwear glued on.

She said, Better to get it over with when she's young. He said, All right but don't let me see it.

She came whizzing down the stairs, thrown like a dart. She was stark naked. Her hair had been chopped off, her head was turned back to front, she was missing some toes and she'd been tattooed all over her body with purple ink, in a scrollwork design. She hit the potted azalea, trembled there for a moment like a botched angel, and fell.

He said, I guess we're safe.